WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image search program for enabling a computer to perform:

a symbol providing step of determining whether predetermined images are similar to or dissimilar from first images and storing symbols for each of the predetermined images in data regions which are categories, in association with one first image, each symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity;

a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving some of the first images stored in a storage section, which are similar to a reference image, thereby retrieving primary selected images;

an accumulating step of accumulating the values of the symbols stored in each category, for secondary selected images included in the primary selected images and being more similar to the reference image than the remaining primary selected images;

a category selecting step of selecting some of the categories, each having accumulated a symbol value greater than the other categories, thereby selecting a first number of categories; and

a symbol-provided image retrieving step of retrieving some of the first images having symbols representing similarity and stored in a second number of categories included in the first number of categories.

2. The image search program according to claim 1, wherein the accumulating step accumulates the values of the symbols stored in each category, for the secondary selected images extracted in the order the descending order of similarity to the reference image, in accordance with attributes values of the corresponding primary selected images.

3. The image search program according to claim 1, wherein the accumulating step accumulates the values of the symbols stored in each category, for the secondary selected images extracted in the order the descending order of similarity to the reference image, said secondary selected images being images that a person who wants to retrieve images has selected in accordance with index images obtained by reducing the primary selected images.

4. The image search program according to claim 1, wherein the reference-image retrieving step has a step of determining whether each of the first images is similar to or dissimilar from the reference image, in accordance with the attribute values of the first image and the attribute value of the reference image.

5. The image search program according to claim 1, wherein the reference image is an image selected from the first images or an image input by a person who wants to retrieve images.

6. An image search program for enabling

a computer to perform:

a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving at least one second image selected from first images stored in a storage section, which is similar to a reference image;

an image-displaying step of displaying an index image obtained by reducing the second image retrieved;

an image-selecting step of causing a person who wants to retrieve images to select at least one third image similar to the reference image, in accordance with the index image displayed; and

a symbol-providing step of storing symbols in data regions which are categories provided for the reference image, in association with the third image selected, each symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity.

7. The image search program according to claim 6, wherein the reference-image retrieving step has a step of determining whether each of the first images is similar to or dissimilar from the reference image, in accordance with the attribute values of the first image and the attribute value of the reference image.

8. The image search program according to claim 6, wherein the reference image is an image selected from the first images or an image input by a person who wants to retrieve images.

9. A storage medium which stores a computer readable program allowing a computer to execute:

a symbol providing step of determining whether predetermined images are similar to or dissimilar from first images and storing symbols for each of the predetermined images in data regions which are categories, in association with one first image, each symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity;

a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving some of the first images stored in a storage section, which are similar to a reference image, thereby retrieving primary selected images;

an accumulating step of accumulating the values of the symbols stored in each category, for secondary selected images included in the primary selected images and being more similar to the reference image than the remaining primary selected images;

a category selecting step of selecting some of the categories, each having accumulated a symbol value greater than the other categories, thereby selecting a first number of categories; and

a symbol-provided image retrieving step of retrieving some of the first images having symbols representing similarity and stored in a second number of categories included in the first number of categories.

10. A storage medium which stores a computer readable program allowing a computer to execute:

a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving at

least one second image selected from first images stored in a storage section, which is similar to a reference image;

an image-displaying step of displaying an index image obtained by reducing the second image retrieved;

an image-selecting step of causing a person who wants to retrieve images to select at least one third image similar to the reference image, in accordance with the index image displayed; and

a symbol-providing step of storing symbols in data regions which are categories provided for the reference image, in association with the third image selected, each symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity.

11. An image search apparatus comprising:

a symbol providing section which determines whether predetermined images are similar to or dissimilar from first images and stores symbols for each of the predetermined images in data regions which are categories, in association with one first image, each symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity;

a reference-image retrieving section which retrieves some of the first images stored in a storage section, which are similar to a reference image, thereby retrieves primary selected images;

an accumulating section which accumulates the values of the symbols stored in each category, for secondary selected images included in the primary

selected images and being more similar to the reference image than the remaining primary selected images;

a category selecting section which selects some of the categories, each having accumulated a symbol value greater than the other categories, thereby selects a first number of categories; and

a symbol-provided image retrieving section which retrieves some of the first images having symbols representing similarity and stored in a second number of categories included in the first number of categories.

12. An image search apparatus comprising:

a reference-image retrieving section which retrieves at least one second image selected from first images stored in a storage section, which is similar to a reference image;

an image-displaying section which displays an index image obtained by reducing the second image retrieved;

an image-selecting section which causes a person who wants to retrieve images to select at least one third image similar to the reference image, in accordance with the index image displayed; and

a symbol-providing section which stores symbols in data regions which are categories provided for the reference image, in association with the third image selected, each symbol representing similarity or

dissimilarity.

13. An image search method comprising:

a symbol providing step of determining whether predetermined images are similar to or dissimilar from first images and storing symbols for each of the predetermined images in data regions which are categories, in association with one first image, each symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity;

a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving some of the first images stored in a storage section, which are similar to a reference image, thereby retrieving primary selected images;

an accumulating step of accumulating the values of the symbols stored in each category, for secondary selected images included in the primary selected images and being more similar to the reference image than the remaining primary selected images;

a category selecting step of selecting some of the categories, each having accumulated a symbol value greater than the other categories, thereby selecting a first number of categories; and

a symbol-provided image retrieving step of retrieving some of the first images having symbols representing similarity and stored in a second number of categories included in the first number of categories.

14. An image search method comprising:

a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving at least one second image selected from first images stored in a storage section, which is similar to a reference image;

an image-displaying step of displaying an index image obtained by reducing the second image retrieved;

an image-selecting step of causing a person who wants to retrieve images to select at least one third image similar to the reference image, in accordance with the index image displayed; and

a symbol-providing step of storing symbols in data regions which are categories provided for the reference image, in association with the third image selected, each symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity.